

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ROME 08825 01 OF 02 122113Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15  
ICA-11 MCT-01 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 /092 W  
-----086983 122143Z /73

P R 121830Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2749  
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE  
AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMCONSUL GENOA  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMCONSUL MILAN  
AMCONSUL NAPLES  
AMCONSUL PALERMO  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
USMISSION USNATO  
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 8825

E.O. 11652: GS  
TAGS: PINT, IT  
SUBJECT: INITIAL ITALIAN REACTION TO MORO ASSASSINATION

SUMMARY: THE INITIAL SHOCK AND DISBELIEF OF ITALIANS AT THE NEWS OF MORO'S BRUTAL ASSASSINATION ON MAY 9 HAS GIVEN WAY TO QUIET BITTERNESS AND CONCERN FOR THE FUTURE. THE DEGREE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE TRAGEDY WAS LIMITED EARLY ON BY THE MORO FAMILY'S INSISTENCE THAT THERE BE NO STATE FUNERAL OR PERIOD OF MOURNING. AS A RESULT, THE COMMEMORATION OF THE SLAIN DC LEADER AT MEMORIAL MASSES AND SILENT MARCHES HAS BEEN RESTRAINED AND SOMBER. IN ADDITION, THE PARTIES HAVE DELIBERATELY AVOIDED POLITICIZING OR EXPLOITING THE MORO TRAGEDY LEST THE ALREADY STRAINED POLITICAL FRAMEWORK BE FURTHER WEAKENED. GIVEN THE DC'S UNPARTISAN APPROACH, THE OTHER  
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PAGE 02 ROME 08825 01 OF 02 122113Z

PARTIES (WITH THE PCI IN THE LEAD) HAVE EFFECTIVELY ADOPTED MORO AS ONE OF THEIR OWN, CLEARLY SEEKING TO PREEMPT ANY EXCLUSIVE DC CLAIMS TO HIS MEMORY. ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM, MORO HAS BEEN EULOGIZED AS A UNIFYING FORCE IN ITALIAN POLITICS. BERLINGUER SET THE LINE FOR THE PCI BY DESCRIBING MORO AS THE POLITICAL LEADER WHO BEST UNDERSTOOD THE NEED TO REACH AN ACCOMMODATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS. THIS EVALUATION OF THE INITIAL

REACTION TO THE MORO KILLING HAS BEEN BASED ON OUR OBSERVATIONS AND THOSE OF THE SEVEN CONSULATES. END SUMMARY.

1. HAVING ENDURED 54 DAYS OF ANXIETY AND FALSE HOPES, THE ITALIAN PEOPLE REACTED TO ALDO MORO'S BRUTAL ASSASSINATION ON MAY 9 WITH BITTERNESS, RESENTMENT AND DISBELIEF. THE PUBLIC HAD BECOME INCREASINGLY PREPARED FOR THE WORST, BUT UNTIL THE PATHETIC PHOTO OF MORO'S CRUMPLED BODY WAS FLASHED ON TELEVISION SCREENS THROUGHOUT ITALY, A SLENDER THREAD OF HOPE HAD CONTINUED TO BE NURTURED THAT MORO'S LIFE MIGHT YET SOMEHOW BE SPARED.

2. THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND TRADE UNIONS HAD ALSO BEEN PREPARED FOR THE WORST. DEMONSTRATING A DEGREE OF ORGANIZATION THAT HAS GENERALLY BEEN THE PRESERVE OF THE COMMUNISTS, WITHIN HOURS THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (DC) HAD CITY WALLS THROUGHOUT ITALY PLASTERED WITH BLACK-BORDERED POSTERS WITH MORO'S PICTURE. CROWDS GATHERED BEFORE DC OFFICES IN ROME AND IN THE PROVINCES. THE OTHER PARTIES (WITH THE PCI IN THE LEAD) WERE ALSO QUICK TO RESPOND TO THE TRAGEDY. DURING THE AFTERNOON AND EVENING OF MAY 9, DEMONSTRATIONS OF SOLIDARITY WERE HELD "SPONTANEOUSLY" IN VARIOUS CITIES, THE LARGEST IN MILAN AND ROME. AGAIN, AS IN THE DAYS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING MORO'S KIDNAPPING, WHITE FLAGS MINGLED WITH RED BANNERS, BUT EVERYWHERE EXCEPT IN NAPLES THE RED PREDOMINATED. THE PREVAILING ATMOSPHERE WAS QUIET AND SUBDUED.

3. THE DEGREE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE TRAGEDY WAS LIMITED  
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ROME 08825 01 OF 02 122113Z

EARLY ON, HOWEVER, BY THE UNCOMPROMISING POSITION TAKEN BY THE MORO FAMILY WHICH RULED OUT A STATE FUNERAL, PUBLIC MANIFESTATIONS OR NATIONAL PERIOD OF MOURNING. THE FAMILY'S ATTITUDE TROUBLED MANY ITALIANS WHO SOUGHT SOME WAY TO PAY TRIBUTE TO MORO AS A PUBLIC FIGURE AND VICTIM OF TERRORISM. IT WAS PARTICULARLY HARD ON DC AND GOVERNMENT LEADERS WHO HAD BORNE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF RESISTING THE TERRORISTS' TERMS FOR MORO'S LIFE. IN RESPECT FOR THE FAMILY'S WISHES, THEREFORE, DC-SPONSORED FUNCTIONS IN COMMEMORATION OF MORO (THE SILENT MARCHES HELD THROUGH ITALY) WERE SOMBER AND RESTRAINED. THE CHURCH TOOK A LEADING ROLE IN PAYING TRIBUTE TO MORO WITH MEMORIAL MASSES ATTENDED BY OVERFLOW CROWDS. THE EXTENT OF THE CHURCH'S PARTICIPATION WAS EVIDENT IN POPE PAUL'S UNPRECEDENTED DECISION TO ATTEND THE MAY 13 STATE MEMORIAL SERVICE COMMEMORATING MORO.

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PAGE 01 ROME 08825 02 OF 02 122118Z  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 8825

4. THE DESIRE TO RESPECT THE MORO FAMILY'S INJUNCTION AGAINST PUBLIC MANIFESTATIONS CONTRIBUTED TO AN ATMOSPHERE OF CALM AND NORMALCY, AT LEAST EXTERNALLY. IN PART, A SURPRISING DEGREE OF PUBLIC APATHY WAS ALSO DUE TO THE EMOTIONAL AGONY OF MORO'S KIDNAPPING WHICH HAD GONE ON FOR SO LONG. PARTICIPATION IN WORKER ASSEMBLIES WAS OFTEN LISTLESS AND PERFUNCTORY. IN ADDITION, THE POLITICAL PARTIES THAT PROVIDE THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT ITS FRAGILE COHESION DELIBERATLY SOUGHT TO AVOID ANY OBVIOUS EXPLOITATION OF THE MORO ASSASSINATION LEST THE ALREADY STRAINED POLITICAL FRAMEWORK BE FURTHER WEAKENED. THE MORO KILLING OCCURRED JUST FIVE DAYS PRIOR TO LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS ON MAY 14 IN WHICH NEARLY A TENTH OF THE ELECTORATE WILL GO TO THE POLLS. THE MORO TRAGEDY AND THE LAW-AND-ORDER ISSUE ARE EXPECTED TO WEIGH HEAVILY IN THESE LOCAL CONTESTS WHICH ARE REGARDED AS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ELECTORAL TEST

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PAGE 02 ROME 08825 02 OF 02 122118Z

SINCE THE 1976 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS OF THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL MOOD. WHILE EACH PARTY OBVIOUSLY WISHES TO DO WELL, ANY SHARP GAIN OR LOSS COULD BE DESTABILIZING TO THE PRESENT POLITICAL BALANCE. THIS HAS LED THE DC TO ADMONISH LOCAL PARTY OFFICIALS TO AVOID OVERLY PARTISAN EXPLOITATION OF MORO'S DEATH. IT HAS MOTIVATED THE PCI SIMILARLY TO STRESS LAW-AND-ORDER AND DEMOCRATIC UNITY.

5. MADE EASIER BY THE DC'S ATTITUDE NOT TO PROVOKE STRAINS IN THE POLITICAL FABRIC AND TO RESPECT THE MORO FAMILY'S WISHES FOR SILENCE, THE OTHER PARTIES WITH THE COMMUNISTS IN THE LEAD HAVE EFFECTIVELY ADOPTED MORO AS ONE OF THEIR OWN. CITING THE NEED TO ISOLATE TERRORISM, ALL THE PARTIES ARE PROCLAIMING MORO AS THE ITALIAN STATESMAN WHO WAS A UNIFYING FORCE IN ITALIAN POLITICS--A STANCE THAT IS CLEARLY AIMED AT PREEMPTING ANY EXCLUSIVE DC CLAIMS TO HIS MEMORY. IN COUNTLESS ORATIONS THROUGHOUT ITALY, POLITICIANS OF ALL STRIPES COMMEMORATED MORO BY STRESSING THE NEED FOR UNITY AND SOLIDARITY. IN PALERMO, THE PCI REGIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT EQUATED THE SLAIN DC LEADER TO OTHER POLITICAL MARTYRS, MATTEOTTI AND GRAMSCI. MANY--INCLUDING DC LEADERS--RECALLED THE MARTYRS OF THE RESISTANCE (THE ONE COMMON NATIONAL EXPERIENCE SHARED BY THE DC AND THE PCI). EVEN AT RARE INSTANCES IN WHICH DC-PCI ANTAGONISMS BROKE INTO THE OPEN (SUCH AS IN PALERMO), A CHANT OF "AWAY WITH THE RED FLAGS" WAS ULTIMATELY DROWNED OUT BY CALLS FOR "UNITY." MUCH OF THE PRESS COMMENTARY ECHOED THIS THEME: CORRIERE DELLA SERA'S EDITOR-IN-CHIEF DI BELLA WROTE THAT THE RED BRIGADES HAD FAILED TO DESTROY "THE SLOW INTERNAL CO-EXISTENCE BETWEEN CATHOLICS AND COMMUNISTS", THE MAJORITY PUT TOGETHER "BY MORO HIMSELF."

6. THE COMMUNIST REACTION TO MORO'S ASSASSINATION DESERVES PARTICULAR NOTE. IN A STATEMENT ISSUED BY BERLINGUER AND PUBLISHED IN L'UNITA UNDER THE HEADING, "HOW WE REMEMBER HIM," THE PCI CLEARLY CHOSE TO ADOPT MORO AS A STATESMAN OF THE LEFT. "ALDO MORO WAS THE POLITICAL LEADER WHO BEST UNDERSTOOD THE NEED TO MOVE TOWARD

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PAGE 03 ROME 08825 02 OF 02 122118Z

CONVERGENCE AND COOPERATION WITH THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT, AND TO FAVOR, STEP BY STEP, THE CREATION OF A PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY WITH THE PCI," BERLINGUER SAID. IN A COMPANION PIECE WRITTEN BY L'UNITA EDITOR REICHLIN, MORO WAS SAID TO HAVE ACCEPTED THE NEED FOR A "SOCIALIST SOCIETY" TOWARD WHICH THE DC AND PCI "WERE CALLED UPON TO COOPERATE." ECHOING THIS LINE, A PCI WORKER INTERVIEWED BY ITALIAN RADIO AT A UNITY DEMONSTRATION ASSERTED THAT "MORO DEFENDED US AGAINST OUR ENEMIES."

7. IN THE ODDLY QUIET ATMOSPHERE THAT HAS CHARACTERIZED THE PAST FEW DAYS, THE CALL FOR UNITY AND ORDER HAS BEEN DOMINANT. ALREADY, HOWEVER, THE PUBLIC AND THE POLITICAL CLASS ALIKE ARE BEGINNING TO FOCUS MORE CLOSELY ON THE BROADER QUESTIONS RAISED BY MORO'S ASSASSINATION. HOW WILL THE THREAT OF ESCALATED TERRORIST VIOLENCE BE MET? WILL THE STABILITY OF THE POLITICAL ARRANGEMENT BE WEAKENED? HOW WILL THE DC RESOLVE ITS LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS WITH MORO'S PASSING FROM THE SCENE?

8. WE ARE POUCHING CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE CONSULATES TO EUR/WE.  
GARDNER

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## Message Attributes

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